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The Friday Letter

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On the Hill

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The House and Senate adjourned for summer recess on August 7 and will reconvene on September 8. In the week prior to recess, the House passed H.R.1340, the Agricultural Commodity Distribution Act of 1987, on August 3. S.305, the companion legislation, was passed by the Senate on August 5. Conference on the bill is expected after Congress reconvenes.

The Senate also passed S.887, The Older Americans Reauthorization Act on August 6. A Floor amendment was approved which provides for older persons and chronically impaired disabled persons to participate in the Child Care Food Program. The House had passed the companion legislation, H.R.1451, in May. Conference on this legislation is also expected when Congress returns.

In September, Congress will also work on numerous appropriations bills. The FY 1988 Agriculture Appropriations bill has not yet been introduced. A large Continuing Resolution is anticipated to fund the Government for the next fiscal year.

-Story by Janice Felds
Governmental Affairs Staff

Electronic Delivery Continues to Improve

FNS contracted with Planning Research Corporation (PRC) in 1983 to test the application of electronic funds

transfer technologies for the delivery and control of Food Stamp Program benefits. The project, located in Reading, Pennsylvania, featured benefit delivery at the point of sale (POS) in grocery stores. The hardware was purchased by FNS and the software developed by PRC. Satisfaction among those involved with the project, including recipients, retailers, and bankers, has been overwhelmingly favorable. The original pilot has been extended, and FNS is continuing its evaluation.

Recently, Pennsylvania was given authority to convert the system over to the State's hardware, and to test new software modified from off-the-shelf Visa/Mastercard POS debit/credit card systems. In late June, the State converted to the new system.

On-site observation of the initial benefit issuance cycle in July 1987 revealed that the change did not adversely affect recipients. Cashiers and store managers remarked that there had not been any of the usual system slowdowns during peak system use, and no problems due to incomplete or delayed transactions. Further performance observations revealed that the new month-end reports took 5 minutes to create instead of 7 hours, the benefit issuance to recipient accounts took 7 minutes instead of the 2-3 hours, and purchase transactions took 8-10 seconds instead of 14-22 seconds experienced with the original demonstration project equipment and software.

-Story by Jill Herndon
Program Planning, Development,
and Support Division

Field Staff Aid Public Affairs Effort

"Music Man" Professor Harold Hill wisely advised colleagues that they had "to know the territory" to be successful businessmen. That advice surely applies when FNS regional public affairs staff advance trips for Assistant Secretary John W. Bode and key FNS administrators or when congressional hearings must be monitored in far-flung corners of the region. Often as not, field staff play an integral role in assisting with VIP visits or reporting the details of congressional briefings in regional cities.

Using field offices to cover important events not only saves travel funds, but also brings valuable experience to the assignment. Field staff know far more about the local territory than their regional counterparts. They are attuned to the lay of the land, which is so crucial in briefing national staff who are visiting governors or appearing before congressional field hearings.

When five U.S. senators held hearings at several Midwestern locations in recent months, the Mountain Plains Region relied on Fay Shalla in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Sharon Haider in Bismarck, North Dakota, to monitor what occurred at three sites. They reported on media coverage, content of the meetings, principal witnesses, and testimony relevant to FNS. Afterward, they clipped news stories from local papers and monitored TV news coverage.

When planning governors' visits for Assistant Secretary Bode, Dennis Loose, Pierre, South Dakota, food program specialist, and Wichita OIC Dan Chambers offered valuable advice on scheduling, status of local FNS programs, key state and civil officials, recent legislative and budget matters, overnight accommodations, and driving times. Being on the scene, they could add anecdotal information and an historical perspective that provided public affairs background materials.

St. Louis field staffer Tom Mell covered a congressional hearing on TEFAP in Sikeston, Missouri, and immediately called in his report from a roadside phone booth. By that afternoon, the Office of Regional Operations had a complete summary of the hearing for the following morning's briefing for the Administrator.

Similarly, Des Moines staffer Chuck Ring gave Associate Administrator Sonia Crow background on economic conditions in northern Iowa when she came to testify at a congressional hearing in Algona. Having spent years working in Iowa, Ring could describe specific groups involved in distributing USDA commodities. He recalled when FNS opened the Food Stamp Program in that tier of counties, knew the economic history of the area, and offered other relevant information.

Working together, field office and regional staff form a critical communications link with Washington.

-Story by Craig Forman
MPRO Public Affairs Staff

Personnel Changes in Headquarters

Effective August 10, Crayton Lankford, director of Office of Regional Operations, will resume his position of director, Financial Management, in SERO. Vernon Morgan, director of Personnel Division, will be acting director of ORO for 90 days. During this period, Janet Osborne will be acting director, Personnel Division for the first 45 days, and Ted Bell will be acting director of Personnel for the second 45 days.

Bode Visits Southeast Welfare Commissioners

The Southeast Region recently hosted Assistant Secretary John W. Bode, who visited Atlanta to talk with the Southeast welfare commissioners. While in Atlanta, Cable News Network (CNN) shot considerable footage of his visits to program sites. He was also interviewed by CNN's Graylain Young, Southeast bureau chief, and Carolyn O'Neil, producer of "Nutrition News" and "On the Menu" features.



Assistant Secretary Bode (center) talks to Southeast welfare commissioners along with Regional Administrator Virgil Conrad (left) and Regional Family Nutrition Program Director Ed Davidson (far left).

In Graylain Young's interview, Bode talked about welfare reform and the problems involved in introducing people to the work environment. He also talked about how states will have the flexibility to restructure welfare under the Administration's reform proposals and stressed that benefits must be targeted to those in poverty who need them.

Carolyn O'Neil asked Bode about the WIC formula rebate system in the Southeast. He stated his support for any endeavor that allows the WIC Program to serve more people on the same amount of dollars. Bode also discussed creative ways that food stamps can be used,

including the purchase of seeds that produce food. He mentioned that recent changes will allow homeless food stamp recipients to purchase low-cost prepared meals.

In summary, Assistant Secretary Bode made the points that (1) the rate of poverty has declined; (2) we are spending more on our programs; (3) we are better targeting food assistance to the poor; and (4) welfare reform is needed as a more efficient way to merge various welfare programs.

Bode also visited The Atlanta Journal for an editorial board meeting. He discussed welfare reform and food stamp employment and training requirements.

Assistant Secretary Bode visited the Martin Luther King, Jr., Early Learning Center, which participates in the Child Care Food Program. CNN cameras followed him as he ate breakfast and visited with the pre-schoolers. CNN cameras also were there at Camp Creek Middle School, where he sampled the salad bar, ate with the students, and did a follow-up interview with Graylain Young.



Assistant Secretary Bode eats breakfast with youngsters at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Early Learning Center.



CNN cameras followed Assistant Secretary Bode to Camp Creek Middle School, where he had a chance to talk with students during lunch.

-Story and Photos by Kent Taylor
SERO Public Affairs Staff

Southeast WIC Directors Meet in Atlanta

WIC directors from the Southeast met with regional WIC staff recently to discuss progress made on Focus on Management objectives and to share information and new developments in targeting benefits.

SERO WIC staffer Karen Elliott demonstrated how to use a personal computer for WIC vendor monitoring. Consumer reporter Sharon Summers of WAGA-TV and Atlanta Journal/Constitution science writer Charles Seabrook formed a panel to explain how best to present news items to the media on the WIC program.

Tracking high-risk infants on the WIC program, using WIC in alternate schools, HR-7 regulations, and nutrition services components of Focus on Management were among the subjects covered during the meeting.

All states received one or more awards for outstanding achievements in expanding services, targeting benefits, developing maternal health manuals, integration of services and innovative cost-reduction measures. North Carolina WIC Director Alice Lenihan also received an award for her exemplary leadership as the Southeast Region's representative to the National Association of WIC Directors.

-Story and Photo by Catherine Rogers
SERO Public Affairs Staff



SERO Administrator Virgil Conrad (fourth from left) presented awards to Southeast regional state WIC directors.

"Youth 2000" Campaign

The "Youth 2000" campaign, a national effort to "nurture America's youth from now to the year 2000," was officially launched at a recent ceremony at the Chicago Federal Building lobby.

MWRO Regional Administrator Monroe Woods attended the "Youth 2000" campaign with Michelle Harris, Midwest regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).



MWRO Administrator Monroe Woods discusses the "Youth 2000" campaign with Michelle Harris, Midwest regional director of DHHS.

Representatives of various Chicago-area youth and health agencies exhibited services and distributed information. Regional Administrator Woods addressed the gathering and described FNS and WIC's commitment toward promoting the goals of "Youth 2000."

Harris, Midwest "Youth 2000" representative, told the audience that "this effort is not a new Federal legislative program, not a short-term effort, nor a quick fix." She said the campaign is a "call to action between now and the year 2000 to motivate America's young people to believe in themselves, make the most of their potential, believe in the value of a healthier mind and body, and to strive to become self-sufficient, productive members of society."

Harris also said that DHHS and the Department of Labor have entered into a partnership to enlist the cooperation of business, communities, and government in support of "Youth 2000."

-Story and Photo by
Midwest Public Affairs Staff

Regions Hold Commissioners Roundtable

Fourteen welfare commissioners, or their representatives, from the Western and Southwestern regions met in San Diego recently to exchange ideas, discuss food stamp issues, and meet for the first time with Administrator Anna Kondratas and Acting Deputy Administrator for Family Nutrition Programs Scott Dunn.



Western Regional Administrator Hicks Elmore introduces Administrator Anna Kondratas and Scott Dunn to the commissioners.



Southwest Regional Administrator Gene Dickey welcomes the conferees on behalf of his region.

The one-day Commissioners Roundtable, co-sponsored by the Western and South-

western Regional Offices, focused on welfare reform, the new immigration law, legislative initiatives, error reduction, quality control, and employment and training programs.



Gerald Reilly, assistant secretary for Economic and Medical Services for the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, explains Washington's welfare reform proposal, the Family Independence Program.

In addition to taking part in the Commissioners Roundtable, Kondratas and Dunn also participated in the bi-regional state food stamp directors meeting.

While in San Diego, Administrator Kondratas met with the editorial board of the San Diego Union and visited an elderly feeding site.

-Story and Photos by Dick Montoya
WRO Public Affairs Staff



Sue Jamiel: Poised to Help

Although she's comparatively new to FNS--joining the Mountain Plains Regional Office in late 1985--Sue Jamiel is adept at handling the many problems that can arise in the areas of payroll and personnel action, processing benefits, allotments, and pre-retirement service counseling.



One of her chief tools is the system developed exclusively for FNS, the Personnel Operating and Information Systems (POIS). It came into use at MPRO in March 1986 for generating personnel actions and in June and July of that year for on-line access to the National Finance Center (NFC) personnel and payroll data.

Prior to joining FNS, Sue worked for the Department of the Treasury for three summers during her college years and then worked as a military personnel clerk with the U.S. Air Force. She spent 3 years with the Bureau of Reclamation, where she had her first experience with automated processing of personnel data. As she looks back on the system she used then, she ranks POIS as being much more modern and workable.

Sue maintains the MPRO master file through POIS and generates personnel actions and reports. She transmits raw data to NFC for integration into its master personnel and payroll files, runs reports, and can use POIS to check on personnel data without the cost of being on-line with NFC.

Sue answers employee questions about how to make allotments for savings or bonds, direct deposit, what happened to a missing check, or how to fill out a W-4 form. She counsels pre-retirees about dates of retirement, estimated monthly annuities, use of leave, and continuation of benefits.

Her work may be complicated, but MPRO staffers appreciate Sue's professional manner when it comes to financial matters.

-Story by Joanne Widner
Photo by Craig Forman
MPRO Public Affairs Staff

Summer Coordinator Smooths Changeover

The Mountain Plains Region has long carried an abundance of Regional Office-Administered Programs (ROAP), many of which are now being returned to the control of various state agencies. Elaine Acosta of MPRO has been coordinating and overseeing the transition of the summer program from largely ROAP to almost entirely state-administered.

During Fiscal Year 1986, MPRO returned the North Dakota summer program to the state agency. During Fiscal Year 1987, Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming are assuming their summer programs. Missouri will be the only state in the region with a ROAP.

In Missouri, responsibility for administering the summer program is divided. The Independence Field Office oversees the western part of the state, including the Kansas City area. Summer sponsors in the eastern part of the state (including St. Louis) apply to the regional office for approval. The St. Louis Field Office handles pre-

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approval interviews, training, and does reviews and monitoring of the programs.

Elaine Acosta works closely with the new state agencies, helping them to assume full control of their programs. In Wyoming, that state assigned the summer program to the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), which has had no prior experience with child nutrition programs. Acosta works closely with the DHSS staff, interpreting Special Nutrition Programs standards and regulations.

As the Mountain Plains states assume the weight of administering former ROAPs, Acosta's coordination provides a vital link in the transition.

-Story by Joanne Widner
MPRO Public Affairs Staff

NERO WIC Program Holds Regional Meeting

The NERO WIC program staff recently held a regional meeting in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, attended by 11 state and Indian WIC program directors and their staffs.

Topics covered by the regional WIC staff included new food stamp regulations which allow certain information to be shared with WIC state agencies and Medicaid expansion which will allow states new optional medical coverage. Under this optional coverage, WIC participants who are not currently eligible for Medicaid may become eligible. Also discussed were the indirect costs assigned to each state and APD requirements and planning which emphasized statewide planning as opposed to individual program planning. New York shared strategies for vendor fraud prevention.

One of the highlights of the meeting came as John Smith, Rhode Island WIC director, was recognized for his state being the first to meet all Focus on Management standards in NERO.



John Smith (left), Rhode Island WIC director, accepts a T-shirt and congratulations from NERO Administrator Harry McLean (center) for his state being the first in NERO to meet all Focus on Management standards. Bob Mulvey (right), NERO WIC supervisor, looks on.

Chris Lipsey from headquarters' Supplemental Food Program Division discussed participation enrollment reporting. Jack Graves of the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta gave a 2-hour presentation on Patient Flow Analysis. The presentation illustrated how WIC clinics can function more efficiently.

-Story and Photo by
NERO Public Affairs Staff

Job Opportunities

FNS is seeking to fill the following vacant positions. To be considered for one of them, submit an up-to-date SF-171, Personal Qualifications Statement, and current performance appraisal to the appropriate personnel office. If you're interested in a Headquarters position, apply to the Employment Branch, Personnel Division, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alexan-

dria, Virginia 22302. Apply directly to Headquarters office for all GM-14 and 15 positions. For Regional positions, directly to the Regional Office. For details on the requirements for any of the positions listed below, consult the official vacancy announcement. These are posted on designated bulletin boards or you can get copies from the appropriate Regional or Headquarters personnel office.

Friday Letter Vacancy Listing By Vacancy Number

JOB TITLE	AREA OF CONSID.	SERIES	GRADE	CLOSING DATE	VACANCY NUMBER	OFFICE LOCATION
o Clerk/Typist	(L)	GS-322	2/3/4	Open until filled	86-35	FNS
o Secretary Typing	(A)	GS-318	4/5/6	Open Continuous	87-999	Various Locations
o Supvry Grants Mgmt Speclst	(USDA)	GM-0501	14	09/08/87	87-83	GMO
o Supvry Contr Speclst	(G)	GM-1102	13	08/24/87	87-95	ASD
o Nutritionist	(A)	GS-0630	12/13	08/24/87	87-H-07	HNIS
o Supvry Nutritionist	(A)	GM-0630	14	08/24/87	87-H-08	HNIS
o Nutritionist	(HNIS-H)	GS-0630	11	08/20/87	87-H-09	HNIS
o Editorial Asst (Typg)	(HNIS-H)	GS-1087	6	08/20/87	87-H-10	HNIS
o Accounting Tech	(FNS-H)	GS-0525	7	08/18/87	87-100	ACD
o Accounting Tech	(FNS-H)	GS-0525	6	08/18/87	87-101	ACD
o Food Prog Speclst	(FNS-H)	GS-0120	12	08/27/87	87-102	FDD
o Food Prog Speclst	(FNS-H)	GS-0120	12	08/31/87	87-103	PAD

ACD - Accounting Division
ASD - Administrative Services Division
FDD - Food Distribution Division
FNS - Food and Nutrition Service
GMO - Grants Management Office
HNIS - Human Nutrition Information Service
PAD - Program Accountability Division

* Reannounced - Those who previously applied need not reapply.

Area of Consideration

(FNS H) - FNS Headquarters
(FNS N) - FNS Nationwide
(HNIS H) - HNIS Headquarters
(USDA) - USDA
(G) - Governmentwide
(A) - All Sources
(L) - Local Commuting Area